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## **Editorial: Baby boxes worth a look**

Think of how desperate you must be to even think of abandoning your newborn. What must be going through your mind? How much stress must you be under at that moment? And what is our responsibility to these mothers? Should we make it easier and safer to complete this act, or direct our resources toward other means of support?

These are serious questions that must be answered. As reported in CNHI state reporter Maureen Hayden's story we published July 6, some have seen a solution in what is known as a "baby box" — "an incubator designed to serve as a kind of a safe and secure drop-box for a parent to anonymously surrender an infant," Hayden wrote.

"Small in length and width, the boxes are meant to be installed outside of hospitals, fire stations and police stations where emergency responders can quickly access an abandoned baby when built-in triggers are activated," she reported. "The General Assembly unanimously authorized a study of the incubators. And it directed the state Department of Public Health to recommend standards and protocols for their use. Those efforts could allow the first boxes to be

installed as soon as next year, making Indiana the first state to use them.”

Of course, like every state, Indiana allows new mothers to abandon their children at safe locations including fire stations, police stations and hospitals. Twenty-five mothers have taken advantage of this law since being enacted in 2008. Mothers will not face prosecution as long as the baby is given up within the first 30 days of being born and shows no signs of physical harm. Baby box proponent and firefighter Monica Kelsey told Hayden the problem with the current system is familiarity.

“I’m a firefighter in a small town,” she told Hayden. “If some girl walked into our department with a baby, I guarantee I’d know her and her parents and probably every member of her family. I don’t want something like that to get in the way of saving that baby.”

As one might expect, baby boxes have not escaped criticism.

“In 2012, amid a rise in their use in Europe, members of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child called for baby boxes to be banned,” Hayden reported. “Their argument is that baby boxes violate a child’s right to know who its parents are.”

We should absolutely continue working towards creating conditions for mothers where this won't seem like an attractive option. While we agree with this notion, it seems cruel to deny these children a shot at life in the meantime.